

# **Introduction to the Psalms**

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Martin Luther in his preface on the Psalms written in 1545 said the following {“Yea, the Psalter ought to be precious and dear, were it for nothing else but the clear promise it holds forth respecting Christ’s death and resurrection, and its prefiguration of His kingdom and of the whole estate and system of Christianity, insomuch that it might well be entitled a Little Bible, wherein everything contained in the entire Bible is beautifully and briefly comprehended, and compacted into an enchiridion or Manual. It seems to me as if the Holy Ghost had been please to take on himself the trouble of putting together a short Bible, or book of exemplars, touching the whole of Christianity or all the saints, in order that they who are unable to read the whole Bible may nevertheless find almost the whole sum comprehended in one little book “}

We are told in the New Testament to sing the Psalms as we sing to God and each other.

Ephesians 5:19 ISV Then you will recite to one another psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs; you will sing and make music to the Lord with your hearts;

Colossians 3:16 ISV Let the word of the Messiah inhabit you richly with wisdom, teaching and admonishing one another with psalms, hymns, and spiritual songs, and singing to God with thankfulness in your hearts.

James the brother of our Lord said when we are happy to sing Psalms.

James 5:13 ISV Is anyone among you suffering? He should keep on praying. Is anyone cheerful? He should keep reciting psalms.

The Psalms are divided into 5 books just like the Torah , Pentateuch, the five books of Moses. Some Bibles will show you the divisions others will not.

Psalms 1 to 41 is the 1st book of Psalms

Psalms 42 to 72 is the 2nd book of Psalms

Psalms 73 to 89 is the 3rd book of Psalms

Psalms 90 to 106 is the 4th book of Psalms

Psalms 107 to 150 is the 5th book of Psalms

The main message as in all the books of the Bible is Jesus Christ.

Luke 24:44 ISV Then he told them, “These are the words that I spoke to you while I was still with you—that everything written about me in the Law of Moses, the Prophets, and the Psalms had to be fulfilled.”

So when we read the Psalms we should expect to see prophecies about Jesus.

There are Psalms known as the Messianic Psalms are:

Psalms 2, 8, 16, 22, 23, 24, 40, 41, 45, 68, 69, 72, 89, 102, 109, 110, 118, 132

These Psalms are classified as messianic because they contain references to the Messiah and are often quoted or alluded to in the New Testament, highlighting aspects of Christ’s person, work, suffering, and resurrection . Other Psalms might refer to the messiah but not as clearly as theses.

You will also find in these Psalms besides prophecy a conversation between the God the Son and God the Father .

Psalms 40:6-8 ISV 6 You take no delight in sacrifices and offerings—you have prepared my ears to listen— you require no burnt offerings or sacrifices for sin. 7 Then I said, “Here I am! I have come! In the scroll of the book it is written about me. 8 I delight to do your will, my God. Your Law is part of my inner being.”

God also uses situations in the Psalmist life that parallels with the Messiah’s life as well when it is refer to. For example David in Psalms 41 when referring to Ahithophel betrayal speaks without knowing about Judas betrayal to Jesus.

Psalms 41:9 ISV As for my best friend, the one in whom I trusted, the one who ate my bread, even he has insulted me!

John 13:18 ISV I’m not talking about all of you. I know the ones I have chosen. But the Scripture must be fulfilled: ‘The one who ate bread with me has turned against me.’

The Holy Spirit inspired holy men of God to write these Psalms. And he used different matters to get them write them as well.

2Peter 1:20-21 ISV 20 First of all, you must understand this: No prophecy in Scripture is a matter of one’s own interpretation, 21

because no prophecy ever originated through a human decision. Instead, men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.

Hebrews 1:1 ISV God, having spoken in former times in fragmentary and varied fashion to our forefathers by the prophets,

When we think of the Psalms many think of David as the only author of them but David was not the only author but others had their share of writing the Psalms as well.

David wrote almost half of the Psalms. He wrote a total of 73 Psalms. The following Psalms was written by him. 3 to 9, 11 to 41, 51 to 65, 68 to 70 , 86, 101, 103, 108 to 110, 122, 124, 131 to 133 , 138 to 145.

King Solomon , David's son wrote two of the Psalms which are 72 and 127

Moses wrote one psalm which is Psalms 90

The Sons of Korah wrote 11 Psalms which is Psalms 42 , 44 to 49 , 84 to 85 , 87 to 88, Korah was the levite who rebelled against Moses, The ground open and swallowed up Korah and those who followed him but his son's were spared and their descendents which were godly men of God.

Numbers 26:9-11 ASV And the sons of Eliab: Nemuel, and Dathan, and Abiram. These are that Dathan and Abiram, who were called of the congregation, who strove against Moses and against Aaron in the company of Korah, when they strove against Jehovah, and the earth opened its mouth, and swallowed them up together with Korah, when that company died; what time the fire devoured two hundred and fifty men, and they became a sign. Notwithstanding, the sons of Korah died not.

Asaph wrote 12 Psalms , he was a levite and one of the leaders of David's choir. He wrote the following Psalms 50, 73 to 83

Ethan the Ezrahite he wrote one Psalm. Which is Psalms 89. He was a very wise man, and a levite . We are told Solomon was more wiser than him.

1Kings 4:31 ASV For he was wiser than all men; than Ethan the Ezrahite, and Heman, and Calcol, and Darda, the sons of Mahol: and his fame was in all the nations round about.

Heman the Ezrahite a other levite, he with the Sons of Korah wrote a Psalm which was Psalms 88. Although it is possible according to the Hebrew that the Sons of Korah wrote the Psalm for him.

Then there are 40 other Psalms by unknown authors. There is even one Psalms or more that some scholars debate might be written in the time of the Maccabean revolt against Seleucid rule around 167-160 B.C. One of these Psalms is Psalms 74 where we read “They burned down all the meeting places” most likely in reference to synagogues which didn’t exist before the Babylon Captivity in 586 BC but after.

Psalms 74:8 ISV They say to themselves, “We’ll crush them completely;” They burned down all the meeting places of God in the land.

The Psalms are both songs and prayers for example:

Psalms 4:1 ISV When I call, answer me, my righteous God! When I was in distress, you set me free. Be gracious to me and hear my prayer.

Psalms 30:4 ISV You, his godly ones, sing to the LORD, give thanks at the mention of his holiness.

The books of Psalms took over 1000 years to write and compile. Psalms is truly a work of art unlike no other.